

BIRD EXPLORER

The tale of the Lewis's Woodpecker

BY PETER J. THIEMANN



Peter J. Thiemann

In autumn we had a bumper crop of acorns, from both white and black oaks and, higher up, from tan oaks.

Many animals benefit from this bounty, including several species of woodpeckers. There are two that really stand out: the Acorn Woodpecker and the Lewis's Woodpecker.

Acorn Woodpeckers, the "tribal clowns," are often seen near their granary trees, working hard to store acorns for winter. This is a community effort, with family and friends working together to drill holes where acorns are stored whole, with shell and all. Some granary trees have thousands of holes in them and are fiercely protected by the Acorn Woodpeckers.



Acorn Woodpeckers are resident birds in our oak savannah, nesting in tree cavities.

But there is competition from a winter guest, the Lewis's Woodpecker, named after Lewis from the Lewis and Clark Expedition in the early 1800s. This woodpecker displays some unusual colors



Colors of iridescent green, pink-red, and white, which are not seen in any other North American bird, adorn the stunning Lewis's Woodpecker. They are highly territorial and will chase Acorn Woodpeckers away from their granary trees and foraging area—the two woodpeckers really don't like each other.

The best places in our area to see this unusual winter guest are Agate Lake, Emigrant Lake, and the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument.

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Photos courtesy of peterjthiemann flickr photo stream.

Day-flying Wild Forget-me-not Moth

BY LINDA KAPPEN

The *Gnophaela latipennis* is a diurnal (active in daytime) moth, of the Erebidiae family of moths, that sips nectar from wildflowers alongside the many butterflies of summer. The common name of this day-flying moth is Wild Forget-me-not, but I will call it "latipennis" for most of this article.

The caterpillars are yellow with black patches, blue spots, and clusters of white hairs. The head of the caterpillar is reddish. The caterpillars feed on *Cynoglossum grande*—houndstongue of the Borage family. The adult latipennis has black wings with white markings showing a distinctive pattern.



Caterpillars feed on *Cynoglossum grande*—houndstongue of the Borage family.

There is a single small white spot on each side of the head. The forewings have two clusters of four white spots each. Each of the hindwings each has clusters of white spots, one of three spots, the other of two. Adults feed on the nectar of many wildflowers. The latipennis have one flight period near the months of May, June, and July. The caterpillar and the adult moth are very striking.

The habitat of the *Gnophaela latipennis* is a mixed forest of conifers and hardwoods, oak woodlands, or other wooded areas with openings in the canopy where the houndstongue plants grow. The range of this moth is from central California north to western Oregon.

I usually see latipennis flying in mid-elevation areas in the Siskiyou Mountains and western Cascade Mountains. I have observed populations of latipennis remaining in an area from two to three weeks, actively sipping the nectar of wildflowers and mating along our flower-laden mountain trails.

In March 2013, my son Dakota and I went on a hike on the Enchanted Forest Trail in Applegate. After reaching the top

we found a caterpillar of the latipennis. I was able to take it home and rear it with houndstongue from the woods on our property. We kept it in a small protective habitat on our porch with a houndstongue plant, where it formed its cocoon. A couple of months later, it finally appeared as an adult day-flying moth. We let it go to fly among butterflies.

The *Gnophaela latipennis* can be misidentified as *Gnophaela vermiculata*. Although I have never seen the two species fly together, I have witnessed them in two separate meadows that were very close together. During a lepidoptera survey of Crater Lake National Park this past summer, I photographed the vermiculata in one meadow; then, during a hike through the forest, I photographed latipennis in a second meadow. Just like the moths, the hostplants for these two species are also of the same family.

If you are out on the mid-elevation trails this coming spring, look for this beautiful caterpillar feeding on houndstongue. Once



Wild Forget-me-not Moth



Wild Forget-me-not caterpillar

in flight among the wildflowers, the moths would be hard to miss with their nectaring and mating behavior!

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Photos by Linda Kappen.

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